

## HOW DOES SYSTEMIC LINGUISTICS DIFFER FROM TRADITIONAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMARS? ITS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

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### Abstract

Discussing about teaching English is always interesting. English teachers are facing a lot of problems, ranges from the approaches up to the materials given. This article will elaborate the advantages and the disadvantages of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and it differ from traditional one. The first, the meaning of SFG is given, based on several language experts, following this, outline the general language features of text types: field, tenor and mode is discussed. The writer then explain the specific linguistic features of text types including theme, rheme, reference, conjunction, verb process and tense and the how teachers can implement this approach in the classroom and the last is conclusion.

**Key words:** systemic functional grammar, approach, traditional and transformational grammar, genre.

### Introduction

Teaching English using the traditional approach has been criticised. The traditional grammar usually focuses on the formal aspects of language (Derewianka 1990). Knapp and Watkins (1994) acknowledge the problem of teaching grammar using the traditional approach focusing on the formal aspects of language. Lester (1976) notes that the difference between the traditional and transformational grammar is that transformational grammar has more detailed analysis which includes 'the deep and surface structures' of the sentence. Whatever the difference is, both traditional and transformational grammars view language from the cognitive process, syntax or discourse perspectives. Using these approaches teachers tend to describe the rules of language rather than seeing how language is used in real communication. Gerot & Wignell (1994) suggest that following rules does not guarantee that there will be an effective communication.

Using traditional and transformational approaches we tend to be "subjective" because we are restricted to the right and the wrong rules of language. This idea is in contrast with the fact that people use language differently based on various contexts and purposes. Moreover, following traditional and transformational approaches most learners are not competent

to communicate in the target language. Now the linguists and educational practitioners change their attention to the contemporary approach, systemic functional grammar (SFG), which appreciates the use of language choices in any social contexts. Another term for this approach is systemic linguistics (SL).

This essay discusses the importance of systemic linguistics. It will firstly define what the term *systemic functional grammar* means. It will then outline the general language features of text types: field, tenor and mode. Furthermore, it will analyse the specific linguistic features of text types including theme, rheme, reference, conjunction, verb process and tense. The narrative text analysed is *Pinocchio* (see Appendix 1). After that I will explain how teachers can apply the activities using genre exploration. Finally, I will give a conclusion and recommendations.

### **Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)**

The current approach which is claimed to be the most effective is called systemic linguistics or systemic functional grammar (SFG). Halliday has introduced it. Martin *et. al* (1997) define SFG as 'a way of looking at grammar in terms of how grammar is used.' It focuses on the development of grammatical systems as a means for people to interact with each other. So, SFG focuses on the contexts and purposes, for example making appointments, giving complaints, speech, writing advertisements, giving instruction, etc. It sees language as the socio-functional outcomes or the final products of communicative tasks. While the traditional and transformational grammars focus on the linguistic rules, SFG places emphasis on how language is used in different contexts. Moreover, SFG appreciates human creativity to use choices of words or sentences.

Callagan & Rothery (1988) think that SFG exposes systematically how the structure of language encourages people to achieve their purposes in social contexts. This can be applied to both spoken and written languages. It means that language is matched to the social structures. The socio functional purposes have a key role in SFG. The meanings of certain words, or sentences are different in certain contexts depending on the socio-functional purposes. Interestingly, SFG views language in a broader sense: it

acknowledges the use of paralinguistics such as the body language, gesture, or eye contact in communication while the traditional approach sees language as prefabricated patterns or arbitrary signs, sound and words (Reuter 2000). Meanings can be found not only in paralinguistics but also in cultural behaviour, music, dance, arts, clothing, family structure, or clothing.

Gerot & Wignell (1994) state that functional grammar sees language as a resource for making meaning. It describes language in actual use and emphasises texts and their contexts. It indicates that language is manifest through social contexts. So we use language to express the intended meaning. Language is viewed from a cultural context perspective. Language is not only a cognitive mechanism. It can be expressed in relation to the people using it. Even though there are many languages from different cultures, a certain cultural group has similar shared knowledge. SL or SFG is the analysis of language from 'the school of thought' called systemic (Reuter 2000). In SL we analyse the text types, called discourse analysis. So the correct outcomes are the genres. Knapp and Watkins (1994) define genre as the processes of language in doing things with language.

### **The General Language Features of Text Types**

There are many types of genre. Derewianka (1990), however, categorises genre into six: recounts, instructions, narratives, information reports, explanations and arguments. *Recounts* tell about past experience. They can be personal, factual or imaginative recounts. *Instructions* tell us how something is done through a number of steps. *Narratives* are usually used to entertain. They can be either imaginary or factual such as fairy story, science fiction, romances, etc. The purpose of *information reports* is to document, organise and store factual information on a topic while *explanations* give a description of how something works or the reasons for some phenomenon. *Arguments* are to take position on some issue and justify it. In this essay I will analyse an example of the narrative genres, *Pinocchio*, from the general and specific features of text types (see Appendix 1).

There are three general features of text types: field, tenor and mode. *Field* is similar to the topic discussed. Martin (1992) defines it as 'the contextual projection of experiential meaning.' Gerot & Wignell (1994) state

that we can discover the field of a text through its content words. Field usually has specialised vocabulary and involves specialised activities. What is involved in understanding a topic is how language appears linguistically in the field, for example what people are doing with the language. It seems to be awkward that a puppet, Pinocchio, becomes alive or the stick of the Blue Fairy can recover Pinocchio's unconsciousness. Because the context is a fairy tale, something impossible becomes possible. Moreover, children usually like imagination.

Field covers topic & subtopics. It includes semantic collocation, lexical cohesion, topic words or contentives (noun, verb, adjective, adverb). Some examples of lexical cohesion include repetition, semantic inclusion, generalisation, synonym and antonym. *Repetition* is sometimes necessary for emphasis to give readers or audience impression. An example of repetition is He wished... he wished... he wished .... We can use *semantic inclusion* to point out the intended meaning, i.e. Look at that (line 23) referring to Pinocchio. To keep the story alive and avoid boredom, *synonym* should be frequently used like sly which is similar with crafty (lines 21 and 26 respectively). *Generalisation* is often used in various ways to describe a general class, for example everything indicating games and rides and good things to eat (lines 54-55). An example of *antonym* is between locked and opened (lines 32 and 45 respectively).

The field of the context of situation lines up with the ideational meaning (Knapp & Watkins 1994). Ideational meaning is similar to the representational meanings that include processes, participants and circumstances. *Processes* are words related to the action in the clause or sentence, for example I will **unlock** the door, or Luckily, Jiminy Cricket managed to hop onto the back of the coach as it **drove away**. *Participants* are words dealing with the things in a clause or sentence that involve in the action such as I, Jiminy Cricket, and it (see the sentences above). *Circumstances* are words or phrases placing the relationship of the participants to the process(es) in time, place, or manner, for example **A long time ago**, a little cricket called Jiminy came to **the home of an old woodcarver** named Geppetto.

Tenor also influences the form and meaning of a text. *Tenor* is the relationship between the author & audience or speaker & listener. Martin (1992) defines *tenor* as the negotiation of social relationships among participants. It also has to do with the ways people communicate the action whether formal or informal and personal or detached (Reuter 2000). Every speech event that we have has a particular register. We have different ways of using words depending on who we speak to or to whom we express the ideas. The tenor of the context also lines up with the interpersonal meaning of the grammar of the text. The interpersonal meaning of tenor is identified with the use of the *finite* element of a verb group or *modals*, for example I went to Pleasure Island to look for you, but a whale **has** swallowed my boat and I **must** save him respectively.

Gerot & Wignell (1994) mention three 'specifiable' terms in the tenor: status, affect and contact. Seeing the *Pinocchio* story, the choices of words used are very simple because most readers are children. The story for children is usually more imaginative, for example the Blue Fairy who can make a puppet called *Pinocchio* alive. If the *status* of the readers are adult, the writers use more difficult vocabulary and the topic will be different as well. Callagan & Rothery (1988) ascertain that if the field is different within the same genre, the lexical items or vocabulary will be different. The sentence or grammar may be different as well. The way of telling stories to children will also *affect* their interest. If *Pinocchio* were complicated, children would get bored reading it or may even dislike it. An interesting way of presenting the story will keep a good *contact* because the readers will have the same-shared feeling with the actors in the story.

The third general feature of text type is mode. Callagan & Rothery (1988) define *mode* as how distant in time and space of the speakers is from the audience they are addressing and the events being spoken or written about. *Mode* means the visual layout of the text or the form and shape of language that falls into the social events. For example, the story about *Pinocchio* can be expressed in either spoken or written languages. We can perform the spoken story of *Pinocchio* by means of film, cartoon, or drama while the written *Pinocchio* can be found in short story, legend, fairy tale, etc.

The use of the written mode depends on the purpose, formality and informality.

### **The Specific Linguistic Features of Text Types**

The writer provides readers the background story of *Pinocchio* as clearly as possible by giving illustration and pictures to make children interested and engaged in their reading because in written mode readers have no access to hear and see the body language. However, in spoken mode there might be musical instruments or even animation describing the story. If *Pinocchio* is played in film, the writer does not have to tell audience about the actor feelings, for example Jiminy Cricket's because they can see and feel from watching the movie. The mode of context lines up with the textual meaning of the grammar. The textual meaning is shown by the use of theme/rheme, reference, logical relations, and lexical cohesion. The following paragraphs discuss *Pinocchio* from the viewpoint of the specific linguistics features: theme, rheme, reference, conjunction, verbal process, and tense.

The word *theme* means the topic words while *rheme* is the associated topic words. Some examples of theme include Suddenly a bright light filled the room, or Jiminy Cricket felt very proud while the rheme are filled the room and felt very proud. There are some *topic contentives* as well: noun, verb, adverb, adjective. The words the street, the Puppet Theatre, the cage, promises, or papa include noun. Save, cried, heard, leave, or drove away are categorised as verbs while happily, eagerly, luckily and finally include adverb. The examples of adjectives are crafty, rich, wicked, free, etc.

Another specific linguistic feature is reference. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define *reference* as the specific nature of the information that is signalled for retrieval. Reference includes deixis, substitution, repetition, and ellipsis. Deixis can be in the forms of nominal, spatial, temporal, or demonstrative pronouns, for example that as demonstrative pronoun and your Conscience as nominal pronoun (lines 23 and 41 respectively). *Substitution* means the words or sentences replaced by others, for example Jiminy Cricket is replaced by Pinocchio's Conscience (lines 11 and 13 respectively). *Ellipsis*, the omission of language items, is used because the inferred meaning is

clear. For example, indicating And you must always listen to your Conscience is shortened by I will (lines 41-43).

Beside reference, conjunction plays an important role in a text to be coherent. *Conjunction* refers to the words and phrases that explicitly focus on the type of relationship existing between one sentence or clause and another (Cook 1989). According to Hasan and Halliday (1976), there are four types of conjunctions: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. Another type of conjunction is *exemplification* which gives description and shows result. *Additive conjunctions*, additional information being provided, include and and but (lines 9 and 31 respectively). *Adversative conjunctions* make a contrast and show a change in the direction of the text while *causal conjunctions* make a causal link between sentences. *Temporal conjunctions* means making a sequential link between sentences. Because *Pinocchio* is a narrative text, we frequently find temporal conjunctions such as at last, after, as, by the time, when, until, then, and finally. Other forms of conjunctions can be mostly found in report, explanation and argument.

The fourth specific language feature is *verb processes*, the dynamic element in clauses and sentences. There are four types of verb processes: relational, material, verbal, and mental. *Relational processes* have to do with the static verbs which do not have intrinsic meanings except if they are relational between the subject and object, for example was, had, make, were, did, would, or is (see the detail text analysis on Appendix 1). *Material processes* mean the action verbs, such as walked, watched, pay, catch, etc. *Verbal processes* are verbs that say something like told, said, shouted, sobbed, roared, brayed, read, and cried. *Mental processes* are the verbs related to thinking, for example felt, wished, and wanted.

Regarding the use of *tense*, we can discuss it from four perspectives: aspect, active/passive, modality, and nominalisation. *Aspect* has to do with tenses either present, past or future. A number of tenses is used in story books like *Pinocchio*, for example A long time ago, a little cricket called Jiminy came to the home of an old woodcarver named Geppetto, Geppetto has brought joy to many people, Now I'm going to make him happy by giving him a son, I have my own little boy to love, You'll be rich, But Pinocchio wouldn't listen, Fuolfellow was waiting just outside Stromboli's caravan, etc.

*Active* means that the subject of the sentence is also the agent of the verb while *passive* refers to the subject of the sentence affected by the verb. Some examples of active sentence include I will **unlock** the cage, I must **save** him, He **took** Pinocchio home and **laid** him on his bed, etc. The passive sentences are His head **was filled** with thoughts of fame and fortune, and A bottle **was washed** ashore with them. *Modality* is used to explain the 'truth' or the 'absolute' certainty/negation of a statement (Knapp and Watkins 1994). Its examples include The gift of life **is** yours, You **must** help Pinocchio, You **will** be Pinocchio's Conscience, **Wouldn't** you **rather be** an actor with the Puppet Theatre?, Pleasure Island **was** wonderful, and But their little raft sank – and Geppetto **couldn't** swim. The text also has *nominalisation*. It is the process of forming a noun from a verb or from a clause, for example The **gift** of life is yours!, ...Pinocchio had come to **life**, But Pinocchio's **dreams** were not to come true, Pinocchio forgot all about his **promises** to the Blue Fairy, and And Jiminy knew that Geppetto and Pinocchio would be happy together for the rest of their **lives**.

Referring to the text analysis above, using SFG benefits teachers and students as well. Firstly, teachers can choose and even design the appropriate materials which give students exposure to text types for students' successful learning in an unconscious way. Secondly, teachers will provide students with the language samples in general and detail. Thirdly, teachers can increase their knowledge especially in the process of writing. Finally, teachers can identify students' strengths and needs to provide them positive feedback. The disadvantage of SFG is that the descriptive characteristics can be overlapping between one and another.

### **The Possible Activities Implementation**

It is very important for teachers to select the materials carefully that have the specific linguistic text types, for example the theme, rheme, reference, conjunction, etc. Otherwise, the materials will be less meaningful and will not help students to explore the language in contexts. In introducing genre teachers do not have to give examples of the text types. This will train



students to be creative and independent in their own learning. Giving a model will only lead to imitation that should be avoided in genre exploration.

Teachers should, however, conduct pre-lead in activity such as brainstorming or small group discussion to build up their passive knowledge so that they are ready to do the tasks. In choosing different types of genre, teachers should make students consciously aware about the choices they make. After completing the tasks students can be given feedback about the language elements which need to be covered in the text types.

To introduce the use of genre exploration teachers can give students different cue cards which will then start exploring the students different types of text. Students are usually more engaged with the tasks if firstly teachers show students unexpected things, for example shoes, flower, Coca-Cola, the Sydney Olympic torch, etc. Using these objects student are then to make their own text types. For example, Group A writes the instructions how to make Coca-Cola; Group B makes Coca-Cola advertisement; Group C writes a complaint letter because Coca-Cola company sold expired product; Group D promotes the newest Coca-Cola product, etc.

Teachers should let students discuss and negotiate to make the end product. During the discussion students will automatically use their 'schema' to make the required task, for example advertising Coca-Cola. They have to use the language features related to advertisement. They realise that they have to use choose the language they are making. This gives students chance to explore their knowledge based on their own efforts. Each group then displays the end product. Teachers can show the features of different genres so that students actually learn from their peers. It is also good to give praise or positive feedback to make students more motivated and confident. It proves that students themselves have potential to make texts based on different purposes that become authentic materials.

## **Conclusion**

In this essay I have discussed the importance of using SFG through text analysis. Its application in the teaching process is also explored. In short, through SFG students become consciously aware about the language choices they are making and even make their own authentic materials. Teachers will

also expose the language samples generally and specifically. Moreover, they will be able to analyse the field of work in order to know students' needs. I recommend this approach to be applied in Indonesia especially of the teachers of English. Using SFG I am sure that teachers will not only fulfill the curriculum target but also more importantly expose learners to the real language in different social events.

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In linguistics, transformational grammar (TG) or transformational-generative grammar (TGG) is part of the theory of generative grammar, especially of natural languages. It considers grammar to be a system of rules that generate exactly those combinations of words that form grammatical sentences in a given language and involves the use of defined operations (called transformations) to produce new sentences from existing ones. In this study, Corpus Linguistics (CL) and Conversation Analysis (CA) is discussed as methods of data analysis. Both CL as a quantitative tool and CA as a qualitative tool have their own strengths and weaknesses for applied linguistics studies. So, the tenets of each view are evaluated and the similarities and differences between them are discussed. Advantages and disadvantages. While CL can offer a broad picture of language, with empirical data and many examples from corpora, CA is good at providing rich details from a data in a. In this article, we consider how corpus linguistics (CL) and conversation analysis (CA) can be used together to provide enhanced descriptions of spoken interaction in the context of small group teaching in higher education.

American Descriptive Linguistics. Its main representatives are Leonard Bloomfield (the head), Charles Fries, Zelig Harris, Charles Hockett, etc. They rejected the traditional techniques of linguistic analysis. Transformational grammar (Zelig Harris, Charles Hockett) distinguishes kernels and transformational rules for expansion and rearrangement of kernels. Kernels are simple naked sentences: The sun shines; She is beautiful; I have a car; I read a book; There is a book on the table, etc. All possible sentences are derived from kernels. Transformational Generative Grammar is primarily associated with the name of N. Chomsky, USA, 1928, linguist, philosopher and intellectualist, professor of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). How does linguistics differ from traditional grammar? Traditional grammar teaches a language while linguistics explains the nature of a language. All grammar is traditional and communicative. Grammar is grammar. It is the way a language works. While traditional grammar is static and does not change, modern grammar is the amorphous, fluid shifting of the rules of grammar over time. What is the difference between constituency grammar and dependency grammar? Its proponents would criticize the study of traditional grammar because of the latter's emphasis on finding historical explanations for grammatical rules. What is the difference between modern grammar and functional grammar and communicative grammar?